DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 427 089 TM 029 472

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE Issues in Appraising Achievement.
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Constructivism (Learning); *Educational Assessment; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Multiple Intelligences; Selection; *Student Evaluation; Test Construction; *Test Use

ABSTRACT

Selected issues must be considered in choosing an effective assessment method from diverse procedures. External means of evaluation stress the use of national and state-developed tests to measure student achievement. In addition to external evaluations of students, administrators may use external tests for teachers. Internal means of evaluating student achievement include teacher-written tests and a variety of classroom-initiated projects and reports. Some considerations in choosing between these approaches, or in using elements of both, are outlined. Other issues that must be considered in selecting assessments are the appropriate use of criterion-referenced tests, the importance of acknowledging multiple intelligences in test construction and selection, and constructivism as a philosophy of education. Some project methods of evaluation are described. A single standardized test for learners would not provide an appropriate measure of student learning. Since evaluation needs to be ongoing, a variety of approaches can be used to assess each student's achievement. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 427 089

ISSUES IN APPRAISING ACHIEVEMENT

There are selected issues that need examining to determine the usefulness of diverse procedures to appraise achievement. Which procedures should then be used to ascertain pupil progress? Can agreement be obtained pertaining to how pupils should be evaluated? Are major/minor disagreements healthy and useful to improve the appraisal process?

External Versus Internal Assessment

External means of evaluation stress the use of national and state developed tests to ascertain pupil achievement. External means of evaluation pertain to developing tests by those on the national and state levels. These test developers are not involved directly/indirectly in teaching pupils on the local level. The local classroom teacher is completely left out of processes involved in choosing test items. Nationally developed tests include the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Standardized tests also come under this category since they are developed by measurement specialists, far away from the local classroom.

There are no objectives listed, for these national tests, that teachers might use fore pupils to achieve. These tests then may lack validity since the NAEP and standardized tests are not aligned with any set of stated objectives (1).

Internal means of evaluating pupil achievement include teacher written test items covering content taught, art and construction projects completed by pupils, diary entries and journals written by involved learners, cassette recordings and video-tapes showing committee work and other processes in the classroom. Additional items, that are internally developed within a classroom by pupils might include book reports, written work, and dramatic experiences.

TM029472

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marlow Ediger

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Internally developed items within a classroom receive little publicity in the news. Externally devised measurement items are widely covered in the media. How the United States compares in educational results with other nations receives much publicity in terms of test results. How states compare with each other in the United States also receives considerable attention in the media. The NAEP test results do indeed receive high visibility in news reporting.

Questions that need to be asked pertaining to external means of evaluating pupil achievement are the following:

1. Should external means receive most of the attention in reporting pupil progress to the lay public?

2. Do external means really present objective data of pupil achievement to the lay public? After all, human beings subjectively determine which items become a part of any standardized or criterion referenced test.

3. Are external means of appraising pupil achievement too far removed from what pupils have had as learning opportunities in the local classroom? There is a problem of validity here when using standardized tests to appraise learner achievement.

Using Statewide Tests to Appraise Teachers

There are selected states which evaluate teachers through testing to see if they should become or remain as teachers within a state. Thus, one state mandated test for teachers can determine if the undergraduate degree, the master's degree or the Specialist in Education (EdS) degree has any merit to determine a person's fitness to teach in the public schools. It costs much money and takes a lot of effort to complete anyone of the above named degrees. Should one test given to teachers on the state level be a better determiner of fitness to teach in a state as

compared to four years as a student at a college/university for undergraduate work leading to a teaching certificate?

Questions that might be raised on certification of teachers through testing are the following:

1. Are high stakes test results equal to doing quality teaching in the public schools or course work and student teaching under college/university supervision?

2. How can one state developed a test determine fitness for teaching?

3. Are teacher education programs that deficient to be wiped out of a teacher's credentials when failing a statewide test on teacher efficiency?

Criterion Referenced Testing

Criterion referenced tests (CRTs) have a related set of measurably stated objectives for teachers to use in testing. Teachers might then align learning opportunities with the measurably stated objectives. The learning opportunities guide pupils in achieving the measurably stated objectives. At selected intervals, such as grades two, six, and ten, pupils take the CRTs to notice if objectives have been achieved. Generally, different states, individually, have chosen educators to write the measurably stated objectives and the CRTs. The goal here is to see how well pupils have achieved on the CRT. Selected states have a cut-off point at which pupils need to achieve on the CRT to be promoted to the next higher grade level. CRTs also indicate what pupils have missed and need to achieve. Diagnosis and remediation is then in evidence.

Questions that might be raised pertaining to state developed measurably stated objectives and their related CRTs are the following:

1. Might educators far removed from the local classroom know which objectives pupils are to achieve on any grade level?

2. Are there too many factual learnings acquired by pupils which teachers must teach toward having pupils achieve these precise objectives?

3. Are CRTs too narrow in scope when having pupils use verbal skills only, in testing situations, such as reading items and marking multiple choice boxes? (2)

Multiple Intelligences Theory and Evaluation

Much has been written on multiple Intelligences and its philosophy in appraising pupil achievement. There have been many ways of dividing knowledge into components parts such as reading and literature, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, and physical education. Each of these areas can be further subdivided such as literature emphasizing the classics as compared to modern. Ancient, medieval, renaissance, age of enlightenment, among others, can provide further discrete categories of literature.

Coming back to the seven categories listed above initially, there are different approaches to be used to appraise pupil achievement, in addition to paper/pencil tests. Multiple intelligences theory suggests using strengths of individual pupils to indicate their accomplishments. For example, a pupil strong in musical capabilities may show his/her knowledge of a unit of study on the Civil War by learning music and lyrics of musical compositions written during that war. Or, a pupil talented in writing poetry may write diverse kinds of poetry on subject matter acquired in the unit studied on the Civil War.

Multiple intelligences theory emphasizes using pupil's talents and gifts to indicate what has been learned. Paper and pencil tests, using verbals skills such as in reading and writing, indicate narrowness in scope in terms of how pupils can indicate what they have learned individually. Pupils are different from each other in many ways including interests, abilities, and talents. Why not have pupils do more of the choosing, on an individual or collaborative

basis, on how to show or reveal what has been learned? (3)

Constructivism as a Philosophy of Evaluation

Constructivism as a term has been used relatively recently as a philosophy of evaluation. Here, within an ongoing unit of study or within a lesson, pupils individually indicate what has been learned and what lacks proficiency. There is a specific time in sequence when pupils indicate what has been learned and what needs additional attention. These specific times are internal or directly related to what pupils are working on as a learning opportunity. External to the learning opportunity, emphasizes a state mandated or nationally given/norm referenced test. Constructivism stresses evaluating what is internal to the activity and not mandated tests in attempts to determine pupil achievement.

Questions that may be raised about constructivism include the following:

1. Might there be both constructivism and testing pupil achievement on the state and national levels?

2. How can constructivism be made and developed into a more objectives system of evaluation in order to become more reliable such as split/half, repeated appraisals, and/or several appraisers' reliability?

3. Is constructivism less objective than state mandated and national tests? After all, individuals write test items for the latter. (4)

Project Methods of Evaluation

Project methods advocates believe that pupils should construct and make projects (models, items, and objects) that indicate what has been learned. Increased meaning is then attached to learning, when pupils develop related projects. Thus, in a science unit on "Weather and How it Affects Us," pupils individually and in committees with teacher guidance, might

construct models of barometers, anemometers, rain gauges, and hygrometers. Pupils receive background information inductively/deductively as the new unit is begun. A variety of learning activities may be used here in providing readiness for in-depth teaching. Each pupil needs adequate facts, concepts, and generalizations so that worthwhile projects are identified for pupils to pursue. Learners might then feel purpose or reasons in developing projects.

Each project that possesses purpose needs planning. Carrying out the plans in order that quality projects come into being requires stick-to-itness. Once each project is completed, criteria need to be developed to appraise the project. Pupils with teacher guidance need to develop quality criteria so that these may be used to appraise. Criteria such as the following may be developed cooperatively, pupils with teacher assistance, to appraise individual and committee projects:

1. the pupil appears to be highly motivated.
2. each pupil did his/her fair share of committee work.
3. pupils stayed on the task at hand.
4. there was strong evidence showing collaboration in the projects being pursued.
5. pupils showed respect for each other.
6. the project was developed in an attractive, appealing manner.
7. the project had functional use, such as the rain gauge measures rainfall accurately.
8. pupils did well in identifying worthwhile projects to pursue.
9. careful planning was involved in each project.
10. continuous learning about the ongoing unit occurred as the project approach unfolded. (5)

Conclusion

There are numerous approaches to evaluation of pupil achievement. Teachers and

administrators need to study and appraise each of these evaluation procedures in determining which would meet needs best. Certainly, a single standardized test results for a learner would not be adequate. Evaluation rather should be continuous and ongoing. Contextual evaluation is necessary in that errors or difficulties faced by pupils may be observed in context and feedback provided to the involved learners. Within a lesson or unit of study, pupils individually may be appraised and provided assistance as needed.

A variety of approaches might thus be used to appraise each pupil's achievement. The results of portfolios, internally developed, may then be compared with criterion referenced test (CRTs) results, developed externally to the school setting. Using diverse methods of appraisal may provide better results as to what pupils have achieved and what is left to achieve.

References

(1) Ediger, Marlow (1991), Relevancy in the Elementary Curriculum. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 411-412.

(2) Ediger, Marlow (1997), Teaching Mathematics in the Elementary School. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 305-306.

(3) Ediger, Marlow (1995), Philosophy in Curriculum Development. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 105-108, 110-112.

(4) Ediger, Marlow (1998), Teaching Reading Successfully in the Elementary School. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 87-106.

(5) Ediger, Marlow (1996), Elementary Education. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 146-156.